

Dealer and a passionate advocate of FDR's agenda.

As a House page in the late 1930s and early 1940s, JOHN learned the intricacies of House procedure. He got to know his way around, and developed a profound respect for leaders like Sam Rayburn.

Even in his youth, JOHN was anything but a passive observer. When Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and FDR came to Congress and declared it a "date which will live in infamy," JOHN was in the Chamber. In fact, JOHN saw to it that one audio recorder continued to run even after FDR's speech ended, so thanks to him we have a fascinating record of the deliberations afterward that quickly led to the declaration of war on Japan.

When he was 18, JOHN enlisted in the Army. After the war he returned to Washington, and, ever a student of the House, he worked as an elevator operator here in the Capitol while attending Georgetown, where he received undergraduate and law degrees. As a young lawyer, JOHN served as a clerk for Sandy's and my uncle, Theodore Levin, a Federal judge in Michigan who, along with our Dad, had actually campaigned for JOHN's Dad in the 1930s.

A few years later, when his father passed away, JOHN Jr. won the special election to fill the vacant seat. The son and student became a Member of the institution that he had studied so closely and that he respected so deeply. And over the years, the Member would become the Chairman, and the Chairman would become the Dean—the most senior member of the House of Representatives.

While that alone is a significant achievement, the true mark of JOHN DINGELL is his devotion to public service that connects him to the great men and women of America's storied past whose statues grace this Capitol, and the legislation he has influenced that has so improved the lives of our people. He contributed to the creation of Medicaid and Medicare, to the Civil Rights bills, to the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Air Act. He fought to protect Social Security—which his father helped create.

Like all great fighters, when JOHN DINGELL is knocked down, he picks himself up. For example, he has helped keep the fight for universal health care alive by introducing legislation to achieve it in each new Congress, just as his father did.

JOHN can be tough, running procedural circles around even the most skilled legislative adversaries. And he can be gruff, for instance comparing a proposal he thinks is foolish or unnecessary to "side pockets on a cow" or "feathers on a fish."

But this tough and gruff Congressman has a softer side. His wife Debbie is personable and glowing and brings extraordinary energy to everything she touches. JOHN and Debbie are each powerhouses in their own right, and their relationship is a perfect synergy.

While Debbie is everywhere, raising funds for great causes, creating personal relationships that enrich so many lives, JOHN is only where he needs to be—focusing like a laser on legislative and policy goals.

There is a common thread in the Dingells' legislative maneuvers, charitable endeavors and even JOHN's unique use of language: they are all devoted to the goal of helping working people. People back home love "Big JOHN" because they know he is on their side—fighting for their jobs, their health, their children.

That is why, as much evidence as there is of John's influence and respect in the House of Representatives, the best way to really understand JOHN's impact on the people he represents is to make a visit to "Dingell Country." In JOHN's district, people have placed JOHN's name on a road, a bridge, a park and a library not just to honor him but to inspire others. Just talk to a few of JOHN's fellow veterans at the VA Medical Center in Detroit. Those vets feel a little better and a little stronger knowing that they live in the JOHN DINGELL VA Medical Center. Or stop by the UAW Region 1a headquarters in Taylor, Michigan, and tell them you've stood shoulder to shoulder with JOHN DINGELL fighting for American workers—and you won't get a warmer welcome anywhere in America.

JOHN is beloved in his district, and he has been a role model to me and to my older brother Sandy since we arrived in Congress. He has also been a wonderful mentor to us and to the entire Michigan delegation.

JOHN has been a son of the House, a student of the House, a Member and a Chairman in the House he loves so much. On behalf of Michigan, I offer thanks to the now all-time Dean of the House of Representatives, JOHN DINGELL, a great institution within a great institution, for his devotion to public service and to the people of Michigan and the Nation.

BELARUS IMPRISONMENT

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, as chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I would like to bring to the attention of the Senate a situation which is literally a matter of life and death for an American citizen, Emanuel Zeltser, who has been imprisoned in Belarus since March 12, 2008. Mr. Zeltser is in desperate and immediate need of serious medical treatment—including a coronary bypass operation.

The poor human rights record of President Lukashenka's regime is well known. No American—indeed no human being—should be subjected to the kind of treatment Mr. Zeltser has been forced to endure during his incarceration. Despite Mr. Zeltser's grave health condition—he suffers from heart disease, type 2 diabetes, severe arthritis, gout, and dangerously elevated blood pressure—Belarusian authorities have repeatedly refused to provide Mr.

Zeltser with his prescribed medications.

He was initially denied two independent medical evaluations and he has reported being physically assaulted and abused while incarcerated. Amnesty International has urged that Belarusian authorities no longer subject Mr. Zeltser to "further torture and other ill-treatment."

Mr. Zeltser was convicted of "using false official documents" and "attempted economic espionage" in a closed judicial proceeding. The U.S. Embassy in Minsk criticized the proceedings, noting that it was denied the opportunity to observe the trial. The State Department has repeatedly called for Mr. Zeltser's release on humanitarian grounds. So have others in Congress, especially my colleague on the Helsinki Commission, chairman Representative ALCEE HASTINGS.

But now the situation appears dire. Earlier this month, Mr. Zeltser was examined by an American doctor. It was only the second time an American physician has been permitted to see Mr. Zeltser. The doctor concluded that "there is a clear and high risk of sudden death from heart attack unless the patient is immediately transferred to a U.S. hospital with the proper equipment and facilities. . . . Refusal to transfer Mr. Zeltser to a U.S. hospital is equivalent to a death sentence." Specifically, Mr. Zeltser is in dire need of a coronary bypass procedure. The doctor also determined that because he had been denied prescribed diabetes medication, Mr. Zeltser's left foot may need to be amputated.

In response to a press inquiry in December, the State Department called for "the Belarusian authorities to release Mr. Zeltser on humanitarian grounds before this situation takes an irrevocable turn." Based on the recent doctor's report it is apparent that such an irrevocable turn is imminent unless this American citizen can be brought home promptly for the medical treatment necessary to save his life.

Belarus has taken some tentative steps to improve its notably poor human rights record, in particular the release of several political prisoners last August. However, Mr. Zeltser's continued, and potentially terminal, imprisonment threatens to override those initially encouraging signs. As such, I strongly urge the Belarusian authorities to release Emanuel Zeltser on humanitarian grounds so that he may obtain the immediate medical treatment his doctor has concluded is required if he is to live.

REMEMBERING CONGRESSMAN WENDELL WYATT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I wish to mark a sad occasion: the recent death of one of Oregon's most respected Members of Congress, Wendell Wyatt, who represented the First District of Oregon from 1965 to 1975. He died peacefully on January 28th at the age of 91 in Portland, OR.